DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 075 092 PS 006 429

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TITLE	Patterns of Teacher Behavior in Preschool Programs.
INSTITUTION	Pacific Oaks Coll., Pasadena, Calif.
SPONS AGENCY	Children's Bureau (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	Mar 69
NOTE	14p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development (Santa Monica, California, March, 1969)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	*Behavior Patterns; Preschool Education; *Preschool Programs; Student Teacher Relationship; *Teacher Behavior; Teacher Characteristics; Teaching Conditions; *Teaching Styles; Technical Reports

ABSTRACT

As part of a larger study, the nature of the teacher-child relationship was examined in a random sample of 50 day care centers in Los Angeles County. Data were obtained by observation of teacher-child interaction and supplemented by interviews with directors and teachers. The groups of variables examined were: teacher performance, structural factors (physical space, administrative framework, and program format), and staff characteristics. Factor analysis disclosed four patterns of teacher behavior: encouragement-restriction, conformity to routine, group teaching, and independence training. The most stable features of teacher behavior were: (1) activity level, as indicated by amount of verbalization and number of communicative episodes; (2) emphasis on working with children individually or in groups; and (3) frequent use of either encouragement, with accompanying lessons in consideration and creativity, or restriction, along with lessons in control and restraint. Few teachers made extensive use of both encouragement and restriction; rather, they utilized one in the absence of the other. Teacher behavior within a center was found to be associated with quality of physical space, size of center, characteristics of staff, and responses of children. (Author/KM)

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ED 075092

PATTERNS OF TEACHER BEHAVIOR IN PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS

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PS 00429

Presented - Society for Research in Child Development.....

Santa Monica, California

..... March, 1969

PATTERNS OF TEACHER BEHAVIOR IN PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS [1/]

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As part of a larger study the nature of the teacher-child relationship was examined in a sample of 50 centers randomly selected from the 396 facilities which offer full day care for children of preschool age in Los Angeles County. Data were obtained by observation of teacher-child interaction in the centers and supplemented by interviews with directors and teachers. Three major groups of variables were examined: teacher performance as indicated by units of teacher activity and by global ratings, including lessons taught and responses elicited from children; structural factors such as quality of physical space, administrative framework, and program format; and characteristics of staff.

A factor analysis disclosed four patterns of teacher behavior, (1) Encouragement Restriction, (2) Conformity to Routine, (3) Group Teaching, and (4) Independence Training. The most stable features of teacher behavior were found to be (1) activity level, as indicated by amount of verbalization and number of communicative episodes, (2) emphasis on working with children individually or in groups, and (3) frequent use of either encouragement, with accompanying lessons in consideration and creativity, or restriction, along with lessons in control and restraint. Few teachers made extensive use of both encouragement and restriction, rather, they utilized one in the absence of the other. Teacher behavior within a center was found to be associated with quality of physical space, size of center, characteristics of staff, and responses of children.

1/ This research was funded by the U.S. Children's Bureau, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Grant-219.

PATTERNS OF TEACHER BEHAVIOR IN PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS

The Problem

Recent evaluative summaries of research on preschool programs have cited the lack of logical studies which examine differences in teacher-child relationship and classroom atmosphere. (Swift, 1967; White, 1968). The absence of such information has made it difficult to gain a perspective from which to assess and compare the variety of experimental work now being published. These studies often describe in detail the educational goals to be implemented, but do not specify the nature of the teacher-child interactions which do occur. Conceivably, it is the nature of these interactions which is decisive in determining outcomes.

This paper reports a portion of the findings of a study designed to assess the adequacy of group day care centers as child-rearing environments. Three questions will be considered in this paper.

1. Are there patterns of teacher-child interaction which can be identified in preschool programs?

2. Are there also consistent patterns of center program by which one can characterize all the teacher-child interactions which occur in a center?

3. If such patterns exist, can predictors of these patterns be identified?

Study Design

A random sample of 50 day care centers (30 proprietary, 5 non-profit, and 15 public), drawn from the 396 centers in Los Angeles County offering full day care, was studied by observational and interview methods. A 20-minute observation of teacher behavior was the basic instrument of data collection. A total of 1604 observations were made. The observations were designed to obtain information about (1) the teacher's behavior as communicative or non-communicative, and if communicative, whether directed toward individuals or groups of children, (2) the apparent purpose of the teacher's behavior (e.g., encouragement, guidance, restriction), and (3) the amount of teacher behavior judged to encourage verbal skills in children. In addition, observers made global ratings summarizing each 20-minute observation period in terms of educational content and certain characteristics of teacher style and children's responses. 1/

1/ See appendix for a summary explanation of categories.

Patterns of Teacher Behavior

We had postulated that there are certain consistencies which characterize teacher behavior throughout a series of observations. A factor analysis disclosed four patterns of teacher behavior.

Pattern I: Encouragement/Restriction appears to describe the alternative ways in which teachers respond to the feelings and behavior of children. Those teachers who accept and elaborate on children's behavior account for high positive loadings on encouragement and on lessons in consideration and creativity. This type of behavior occurs in the absence of large amounts of restriction and use of control and restraint, behaviors which characterize teachers who respond repressively to children's feelings and behavior.

I. ENCOURAGEMENT/RESTRICTION

TEACHER BEHAVIOR 1/	FACTOR LOADING
Nonroutine encouragement to individuals	.89
All nonroutine encouragement	.87
All encouragement	.81
Approval/nurturance to individuals	.68
Consideration*	.53
Creativity and experimentation*	.52
Total verbal skills to individuals	.48
Interpretive verbal skills to individuals	.47
All routine encouragement	.34
Pleasure, awe and wonder*	.33
Information exchange to individuals	.32
Rules of social living*	-.31
Total restriction to individuals	-.57
All restriction	-.62
Control and restraint*	-.68

* Lessons Taught

1/ Data are based on the overall behavior of 104 teachers who were observed for 10 twenty-minute periods.

Pattern II: Conformity to Routine appears to reflect the extent to which a teacher is concerned with enabling individual children to adapt to the routines of social living. There is high emphasis on guidance and on care of physical needs and other neutral activities. Restriction and, to a lesser degree, control and restraint also appear high in this factor, possibly because the emphases described can be achieved only by the use of restrictive discipline.

Verbal skills also appear high on this scale, but they are not accompanied by ratings for any lessons taught which are indicative of educational emphasis. The presence of an emphasis on verbal skills may be tied more to an explanation of instructions than to explanations of social relationships. The high loadings for tempo and teacher verbalization indicate that these teachers are active and talkative. However, in the absence of nonroutine encouragement or of indications of lessons taught, except for a low loading for control and restraint, it would appear that these teachers are not warmly involved and have relatively little effective educational contact with children.

II. CONFORMITY TO ROUTINE

TEACHER BEHAVIOR	FACTOR LOADING
Total behavior directed to individuals	.90
Total guidance to individuals	.83
Total neutral behavior to individuals	.81
Information exchange to individuals	.77
All guidance	.76
Total restriction to individuals	.63
High teacher verbalization	.61
All restriction	.59
Interpretive verbal skills to individuals	.59
Care of physical needs to individuals	.51
Total verbal skills to individuals	.42
Fast tempo	.40
All routine encouragement	.31
Control and restraint*	.31
Total behavior directed to subgroups	.30

* Lessons Taught

The third factor, Group Teaching appears to describe an emphasis on group-centered teaching. Activity directed to groups is high, and there is marked absence of attention to physical care. Attention is directed primarily to teaching, evidently with particular emphasis on verbal skills, such as those taught in lessons on verbal-physical coordination and on formal skills. The loadings for tempo and teacher verbalization indicate that these teachers, like those described in the preceding factor, do not function at a relaxed pace. Behavior directed to individuals is particularly characterized by teacher suggestion, teacher approval, and emphasis on verbal skills.

III. GROUP TEACHING

TEACHER BEHAVIOR	FACTOR LOADING
All behavior directed to groups	.72
Formal skills*	.67
All verbal skills	.64
Teacher suggestion to individuals	.63
Teacher approval to individuals	.59
High number of lessons taught	.58
Verbal-physical coordination*	.54
Total verbal skills to individuals	.47
Fast tempo	.45
High teacher verbalization	.45
All routine encouragement	.35
Knowledge and awareness*	.34
Rules of social living*	.34
Total neutral behavior to individuals	-.30
Non-communicative behavior	-.41
Care of physical needs to individuals	-.55

* Lessons Taught

The last factor, Independence, draws more on content, as indicated by the paucity of loadings in categories of teacher behavior.

This factor appears to describe teachers who spend limited time in communicative interaction with children, who encourage children to solve their own problems, and who are acceptant of actions and feelings. These teachers use relatively little routine encouragement or praise for correct response. Their primary attitude appears to be one of fostering independence and of restraint from active involvement which might detract from the child's ability to work out his own solutions. The high loading for low numbers of lessons taught further points to an absence of any indicators for consistent involvement with children.

IV. INDEPENDENCE

TEACHER BEHAVIOR	FACTOR LOADING
Low number of lessons taught	.71
Self-sufficiency*	.59
Dealing with strong emotion*	.50
Non-communicative behavior	.47
Consideration for rights and feelings*	.39
Dealing with other children*	.36
Teacher direction to individuals	-.29
All routine encouragement	-.29

*Lessons Taught

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In summary, the features of a teacher's behavior which appear to be most consistent over a series of observations are the frequent use of either encouragement or restriction. Apparently, few teachers make high use of both; rather, they utilize one in the absence of the other. A second feature which appears to be fairly stable is the activity level of the teacher as indicated by the amount of teacher verbalization and number of communicative episodes.

Both of these characteristics are indicated in the factor analysis, Pattern I, Encouragement/Restriction, describes teachers who are high in

encouragement and low in restriction, or vice versa. Patterns II and III both appear to describe teachers whose general activity level is high. However, the second factor describes activity which seems primarily concerned with maintenance of routines of daily living, while the third factor describes activity which is definitely educational and is directed primarily to groups of children.

The fourth factor appears to identify teachers whose level of communicative activity is low. Their activity is designed to encourage independence in children, and thus, it may be surmised, to reduce the necessity for active teacher intervention.

Center Program

We also wished to determine whether there were certain consistencies in center program which might be identified. Center program is the outcome, not only of the teaching styles of its staff, but also of decisions made concerning activities to be selected, scheduling, and use of space.

The data on which information regarding center program is based are totals for all observed behavior within each center, converted into percentages within categories. A factor analysis again disclosed four major factors which describe patterns of program in centers.

Two factors are quite similar to those for teachers. The first and strongest resembles teacher Pattern I, Encouragement/Restriction; the other describes an emphasis on group teaching comparable to that of teacher Pattern III. In the center pattern, however, both group teaching and the alternative pole of teaching directed toward individuals are brought more clearly into focus.

The other two patterns bear some resemblance to teacher patterns of conformity to routine and independence, since they appear to deal with style of leadership. Here again, the patterns for center program show a more clearly drawn bi-polar dimension.

PATTERNS OF CENTER PROGRAM 1/

I: FREEDOM-RESTRAINT

CENTER PATTERN	FACTOR LOADING
Sensitive teacher manner	.83
All nonroutine encouragement	.78
Total encouragement to individuals	.63
Pleasure, awe and wonder*	.59
Dealing with other children*	.59
Creativity and experimentation*	.55
Consideration*	.34
Dealing with strong emotions*	.30
Teacher approval to individuals	-.37
Total guidance to groups	-.45
Total guidance to individuals	-.60
All guidance	-.66
Rules of social living*	-.68
Total restriction to individuals	-.84
All restriction	-.86
Control and restraint*	-.86

* Lessons Taught

II: ACTIVE-INACTIVE TEACHER LEADERSHIP

CENTER PROGRAM	FACTOR LOADING
Total behavior directed to subgroups	.55
Care of physical needs to individuals	.50
Self-sufficiency*	.46
Non-communicative behavior	.44
All guidance	.32
Low number of lessons taught	.31
Total behavior directed to groups	-.31
Rules of social living*	-.32
Total verbal skills to groups	-.41
Total teacher direction to groups	-.46
Knowledge and awareness*	-.50
Formal skills*	-.50
Total verbal skills to individuals	-.56
Teacher approval to individuals	-.58
All verbal skills	-.65
Teacher suggestion to individuals	-.82
All teacher direction	-.82
Total teacher direction to individuals	-.89

* Lessons Taught

1/ Data are based on 1604 twenty-minute observations in 50 centers.

III. INDIVIDUAL-GROUP PROGRAM

CENTER PATTERN	FACTOR LOADING
Total behavior directed to individuals	.82
Consideration*	.58
Information exchange to individuals	.46
All nonroutine encouragement	.45
Creativity and experimentation*	.44
Total verbal skills to individuals	.43
Knowledge and awareness*	.41
Total encouragement to individuals	.40
Total neutral behavior to individuals	.30
Eye-hand coordination*	-.30
Formal skills*	-.34
Verbal-physical skills*	-.44
All teacher direction	-.50
Total verbal skills to groups	-.66
Total teacher direction to groups	-.69
Total guidance to groups	-.70
Total behavior directed to groups	-.84

* Lessons Taught

IV. DIRECT-INDIRECT STYLE OF SUPERFICIAL INVOLVEMENT

CENTER PATTERN	FACTOR LOADING
Total neutral behavior to individuals	.64
Care of physical needs to individuals	.48
Information exchange to individuals	.43
Self-sufficiency*	.37
Total behavior directed to individuals	.34
Non-communicative behavior	.30
Total verbal skills to groups	-.33
All verbal skills	-.44
Routine encouragement to individuals	-.83
All routine encouragement	-.84

* Lessons Taught

Conclusions

We may conclude that two basic dimensions appear to underlie variations in the child rearing environment of the day care center. The first dimension reflects alternative conceptions of the socialization process; the second has to do with the exercise of power by the teacher.

At one pole of the first dimension are adults who socialize children by providing them with prescribed forms of behavior - cultural givens which it is the child's task to acquire with assistance from adults. At the other pole are adults who work to develop individualized forms of social behavior from within the child himself, regarded as a spontaneous and creative individual.

These divergent approaches lead to logically opposite conclusions about the kinds of competence which should be fostered in children. Those who believe that form must be given act as models and rule-enforcers, teaching factual information and giving generous feedback for right and wrong. Those who seek to develop children's individualized behavior attempt to foster general attitudes of consideration for others and an experimental, questioning approach to the environment.

The second dimension, teacher exercise of power, reflects the extent of the teacher's involvement and her experience of herself as an active force in the environment. Teachers who use their power actively are high in encouragement or restriction, and in numbers of lessons taught. Teachers who behave less actively appear to maintain minimal involvement either by large amounts of non-communicative behavior, attention to physical care, or use of routine encouragement.

These differences in teacher behavior were predicted to some extent by interview data on teacher attitudes and concept of role. However, one of the clearest findings of the total study is the extent to which teacher behavior is affected by situational factors of which teachers have little awareness. Particularly important factors are the size of the day care center and the quality of physical space.

Brief Explanation of Categories

Observers divided the flow of teacher behavior into units, using procedures originally developed by Barker and Wright (1954). For this purpose a definition of units developed at the Merrill- Palmer Institute by Dorothy Haupt for nursery school observation was used. For example:

Teacher sets up easel	1 unit
Teacher asks John if he wishes to paint, John nods affirmatively	1 unit
Teacher tells him to get an apron	1 unit

Units of Teacher Activity

Non-communicative - All teacher behavior which does not involve any interchange between the teacher and children.

Communicative - Teacher behavior which involves an interchange between persons. It may be verbal or non-verbal. Social interaction is the criterion for non-verbal activity.

Encouragement - All units of activity which give help, support, approval, pleasure, confidence, and knowledge.

Routine - Teacher gives a friendly or neutral response to child's approach. Teacher response is routine or stereotyped as opposed to responsive category where teacher is brief but clearly related to child's self-initiated activity.

Non-routine - Teacher activity which clearly relates to the self-initiated activities of the child.

Teacher-Direction - The teacher initiates, but does not anticipate that the child necessarily will accept her goals. Teacher sets goals without specific evidence that child is interested.

Guidance - Guidance is assumed to have both facilitative and restrictive properties. It may guide, control, train and/or direct the children (child). Included here are routine mechanics of management, handled without evidence of conflict.

Restriction - Teacher behavior which deals with conflict between child's wishes and those of teacher. Conflict exists where child does not accept teacher's goals and teacher moves to obstruct child's activities.

Neutral - Teacher behavior which has no intent to encourage, manage, or restrict, such as exchange of information or physical care.

Development of Verbal Skills - Teacher activity which develops the child's ability to listen, express himself, or understand by means of verbal communication.

Global Ratings (made at end of each 20-minute period).

Lessons Taught - A rating based on the observer's perception of teacher's educational emphasis during the 20-minute observational period.

Children's Responses - from disinterested to exceptionally involved.

Tempo - from lethargic to rushed.

Teacher Manner - from sensitive to irritable, sharp.

* * * *

Western Data Processing Center at UCLA provided the computer facilities for data processing. The factor analysis used a principle components solution as described in the BMD Manual. Fifty-two variables were used in the analysis of teacher patterns, 40 variables in the analysis of center program. Only loadings of .29 or above are presented.

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